

The Tea Party in American Politics
Honors 135 Lectures

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1 The Tea Party: Competing Interpretations

I'd like to begin this lecture by talking briefly about the style I will use in my lectures. Those of you who are taking classes in the social sciences and humanities are probably starting to encounter professors who talk about multiple interpretations. You may find it frustrating for a teacher to make things more complicated by introducing ideas that you know are wrong, and you may be bothered when a professor refuses to state his opinion more succinctly and clearly. They often do that because, at this level, the study of history, politics, literature, sociology, and culture demands explanations for complex phenomena that result from many causes. The world is hard to understand; try not to shy away from claims that seem too measured or too subtle. I would even suggest that the simplest explanations, the ones that seem clearest, are sometimes the least helpful.

That's not to say that I condemn clarity. Clear writing is one of the things I most admire. What I mean is that simple explanations, or short explanations, rarely tell the whole story. Thus, when a reporter says, "the Tea Party is motivated by racism," or a Fox News commentator says, "These are just a bunch of people who are worried about their country," we shouldn't be satisfied. We should ask ourselves why this reporter believes that racism is the underlying cause, and we should ask who is worried, what they are worried about, and how they differ from people who aren't participating in Tea Party protests. Many people were quite worried in 2009—only some of

them participated in Tea Party protests. What was different about those people that might have led them to protest?

With that established, I would like to begin by talking about what people believe the Tea Party is. We've already had a discussion about this, and I thought your responses were fascinating.

Kate Zernicke, a reporter for the *New York Times*, spent several months interviewing Tea Party supporters for what is really the only book on the movement, *Boiling Mad*. According to Zernicke, the Tea Party is [slide] "An authentic popular movement, brought on by anger over the economy and distrust of government—at all levels, and in all parties." This description brings together several of the things Tea Partiers say about themselves. All over Tea Party literature you will find the claim that members of the Tea Party are ordinary Americans; in videos and reporting pieces, you consistently hear Tea Party activists say, "I've never done anything like this before."

One of the most interesting aspects of the last few years in politics has been the way Democrats have gone on record with statements that paint the Tea Party as a false grass-roots uprising, "astroturf." Although some groups that have played an important part in the movement, like FreedomWorks, which is run by experienced organizers and the well-connected former House Majority Leader, and Steve Forbes (the billionaire), the Tea Party does not appear to be "fake."

When Democrats, or anyone else, asserts that the Tea Party is not a popular movement, they are trying to delegitimize it. It seems that, at least in 2009 and early 2010, when the Tea Party was at its peak, language like that only made them angry. Saying that the protests that they were organizing were false, implying that Tea Party members are stupid, or worse, puppets, encouraged their belief that politicians were not interested in them. To the viewer who sympathizes with the Tea Party, this video shows the president of the United States belittling the channel you rely on for information, making fun of people who are protesting things you do not like, and suggesting that someone who does not look so different from you is incapable of having "a serious conversation." Conjure up in your mind your image of a Tea Party sympathizer, or imagine a Republican. Would this person think, after watching this clip, that America was being run by people who cared about him or her, who thought the same as he or she thinks? Is the man on screen someone like them?

The authenticity of the Tea Party is thus a major source of contention. The debate takes on oppositional tones in books like conservative pollster

Mark Rasmussen's *Mad as Hell*, which describes an America divided into two camps: "mainstreamers" and a well-educated "political class," defined, as far as I can tell, by the people who responded to a poll question by answering that they trusted America's political leaders' judgment more than they trusted the judgment of the American people. While his methods are questionable, his way of distinguishing "us" from "them" may provide further insight into the Tea Party ideology. We, the mainstream, don't trust our leaders. People who trust the leaders, really, people who trust the government, are people who don't share mainstream American values.

Tea Partiers often claim that they represent either a majority of public opinion, or the only people who have America's true interests at heart. The first idea is reflected in a claim made by a number of Tea Party organizations that many of their members (I've rarely heard them claim more than one-third) are disaffected Democrats. It's a claim that reminds me of Richard Nixon, who, after a decade of thwarted presidential bids, won the presidency with a campaign that reached out to a group he called Middle Americans, or the Silent Majority, people who did not trust the government to do what was best and were angry. One thing we will be discussing this semester is whether or not the Tea Party is a modern version of this Middle American group. While some in the Tea Party do claim to be a movement of ordinary people, they are different from the Silent Majority in at least one very important respect: Nixon called the Silent Majority "the non-shouters" and "non-demonstrators." The Tea Party revels in its liberal adaptation of community organizing and protest tactics of the radical left. Dick Arney sums it up: "we have studied the street tactics of leftists like Saul Alinsky."

That quote prompted conservative columnist David Brooks to write a piece calling the Tea Partiers "Wal-Mart Hippies." Arney, like many others involved in the protests, takes pride in the comparison to radicals. Sam Adams is the star of his *Give Us Liberty: A Tea Party Manifesto*, a book he co-wrote with another key member of FreedomWorks, Matt Kibbe.

In Arney's words we see another important aspect of the Tea Party ideology: reverence for America's Revolutionary period and early leaders. Many of the movement's attacks on the federal government—and there are many—are couched in language that echoes, or directly draws from leaders of the American revolution. With that patriotic streak comes a reverence for a particular interpretation of the constitution, an interpretation they call "originalism," that delegitimizes most of the activities of the federal government. Contempt for the federal government has been around for a long time. We'll be talking

about its appeal to conservatives when we examine Barry Goldwater in week four. Although libertarians like Ron Paul have been carrying this small government, small constitution torch for decades—literally, decades, watch Ron Paul’s 1980s presidential campaigns—the ideology has regained strength under Obama, returning to at least as prominent a place as it occupied under Clinton in the 1990s.

Some commentators see a cycle of anti-government resurgence that coincides with the election of Democrat presidents. It’s certainly possible to find people saying things that sound quite a bit like Tea Party rhetoric being spoken in the years after Kennedy was elected, or earlier. Here’s [slide] the man who helped launch Barry Goldwater’s career in presidential politics sounding off after the election of John Kennedy. Manion’s quote illustrates another trend that many observers claimed described the Tea Party: paranoia. Later in the semester we’ll read sections from the book that introduced that idea of political paranoia in US politics, Richard Hofstadter’s *The Paranoid Style in American Politics*. When Glenn Beck was at his ratings peak and Sarah Palin making headlines with her claim that the 2009 healthcare reform act would create government “death panels,” many authors turned to Hofstadter’s essays on McCarthy and the John Birch society to understand the Tea Party movement.

A few commentators took the paranoid thesis further, arguing that the Tea Party’s paranoia was exacerbated by the fact that Barack Obama was African-American. The accusation that Tea Partiers are racists has appeared in a number of publications, often appearing in op-eds by commentators who describe the movement’s language as “coded.” For these writers, when the Tea Party says that the country is being run for the benefit of people who are not like them, the Tea Party is speaking in coded language that says: “the government is being run by a black man for black people.” Although I think there is a little merit to this claim, I also believe that “people who are not like us” encompasses a wide range of people, and has some racial overtones for most Tea Partiers.

Frustration is a constant theme. For Dick Armey, frustration is watching how Republicans who took over the House in 1994 eventually compromised with Democrats. For the people Zernicke interviews, watching the government involve itself in the market—saving banks and propping up failing carmakers, then offering relief to struggling homeowners—was what pushed them into activism. Some of these activists were angry that the government had “rewarded bad behavior.” Others were afraid that government involve-

ment in the economy was the beginning of a creeping socialism. Healthcare reform raised a similar specter of government social control.

As has happened several times, paranoia and the belief in an unfettered free market merged together to create an unexpected political movement. One of the fascinating things about this party is that its style is often called *populist*, a term whose meaning we will discuss later, while its policies are very different from what has traditionally been associated with populism. Here, Michelle Bachmann announces with pride that she fought against financial regulation in the wake of the financial crisis, justifying it with what many would call a “coded” claim—“over the top bill” reminds certain listeners of the ways in which the government has begun to exert control over the economy. We will talk about whether a movement that defends moneyed interests can really be called populist, and why a movement with at least some of the characteristics of a populist movement would be willing to shield the banking sector from regulation.

Many people involved in the Tea Party movement explain that they were acting out of consideration for future generations, wondering out loud whether their children and grandchildren would be able to enjoy the same living standards and opportunities that they did. America was on the wrong track; 92% of Tea Partiers agreed on that. They were afraid. And they were frustrated: “Nobody cared about people like me.”

2 A Brief History of the Tea Party, 2009–2011

According to the mythology, it all started when Rick Santelli started yelling from the trading floor of the Chicago Board of Trade [video]. Rick’s complaint, echoed by other traders, that the government was rewarding “the losers” quickly became “the rant heard round the world”—within weeks, his call for a “Chicago Tea Party” had turned into a series of protests that gathered more and more strength as the midterm elections approached. The name Tea Party comes from Rick’s rant, but the first Tea Party protest had actually taken place three days earlier in Seattle. [porkulus slide] The protest, called “Porkulus,” was a demonstration against the economic stimulus package that passed Congress the following day. According to the *Times*, the word originated on a January 28th broadcast of the Rush Limbaugh show,

and, if you couldn't tell, was a title meant to poke fun at the pork-barrel projects he believed were in the bill.

The Porkulus protests were organized by Keli Carender, a bookish Seattle woman who moonlights as a stand-up comedian and writes a blog under the name "Liberty Belle." Most portraits of Carender cast her as a political novice, an ordinary (conservative) person pushed to the breaking point by government spending—Zernike's book as well as Rasmussen's repeat that claim. And while it is true that she had never organized before, it is worth knowing that Carender grew up with a politically active father, a father who had served as a Democratic precinct officer, took her to a Jesse Jackson campaign rally (at her urging) and eventually broke with the party over its focus on abortion. Keli Carender grew up in a more political household than the average American. Michelle Malkin, a prominent conservative blogger, arranged for the protestors to have trays of pulled pork. About a hundred people showed up. Their concerns and demands were summarized by one John Lee, who told a Seattle Times reporter, "We're just tired of sitting around. We feel powerless anymore." A 69 year-old Seattle woman explained, "I'm tired of them taking money away from people that earn it and giving it to people that don't earn it." [Lee quote slide]. A few weeks later, 300 people showed up. Then 1,200 to an April 15 Tax Day protest, a "Tax Day Tea Party."

Thanks to her willingness to reach out to the conservative media world, Carender's protest caught others' attention. So did the language—and the sentiment—of Rick Santelli's rant. Before February was over, Jenny Beth Martin had organized the Tea Party Patriots in Atlanta. Martin's group eventually drafted a document they called "The Contract From America," its name a reference to a pledge Republicans made in 1994 as they took over the US House for the first time in decades, called the Contract With America. Interestingly, the Contract With America counted Dick Armey and Newt Gingrich among its co-authors, as well as disgraced former House Majority Leader Tom Delay and current House Majority Leader John Boehner. The contract from America is a pledge that commits those who sign it to, among other duties, "Require each bill to identify the specific provision of the Constitution that gives congress the power to do what the bill does," "demand a balanced budget," "adopt a simple and fair single-rate tax system by scrapping the internal revenue code and replacing it with one that is no longer than 4,543 words—the length of the original Constitution," "defund, repeal, & replace government-run healthcare," and "permanently repeal all

tax hikes, including those to the income, capital gains, and death taxes currently scheduled to begin in 2011.”

Of the many groups that sprung up in early and mid-2009, the other most prominent was the Tea Party Nation, started by a former county prosecutor from Tennessee named Judson Phillips. The Tea Party Nation site became an important network for the nascent Tea Party movement. It was Tea Party Nation that, in 2010, hosted the first Tea Party National Convention, where Sarah Palin spoke to a crowd of people who’d paid \$900 apiece to attend the convention and see her. These two groups spawned dozens, if not hundreds of local affiliates. Beyond them were countless unaffiliated groups: county- and city-level groups copying or hewing closely to the Tea Party rhetorical style. Some were disruptive—loudly interrupting town hall meetings—some were tongue-in-cheek, as the people in costumes show. Zernike, and many others describe a carnival atmosphere in the early rallies. Groups of people out getting involved in something for the first time ever, or the first time in a long time, thrilled at the chance to meet like-minded people, enjoying the chance to get out of the house, shout, be angry, make fun; they loved sticking it to the man—at least according to David Brooks.

[Tea Party Express slide]

Another force also helped move the Tea Party along. Moneyed groups like Dick Arme’s FreedomWorks, which trained activists and tossed around large amounts of money, Americans for Prosperity, a group set up by the billionaire Koch brothers, most recently in the news for its contributions to the Wisconsin Republican Party effort to end collective bargaining for state workers. These groups had experience, were well-connected, and brought huge resources to bear. Their activities were part of what Democrats—and Republicans not aligned with the Tea Party movement—called “astroturfing.” FreedomWorks has used a social network site modeled on the Obama campaign’s Organizing for America to connect Tea Party groups. It’s an interesting phenomenon: old Republican capital laying the groundwork for “new” grassroots anger and organization.

A lot was made of the Tea Party’s role in Scott Brown’s stunning election to the Senate in January 2010. Although Boston-area Tea Party groups and the Tea Party Express contributed money to Brown’s campaign, Tea Party groups were not a very visible presence and played only a small role.

The Tea Party’s first chance to contest an election came in October 2009, when John McHugh, a Republican representative from New York’s 23rd District became Secretary of the Army and vacated the seat. Republicans on

the district nominating committee chose Dede Scozzafava, a moderate state representative to challenge the Democratic candidate in the special election. Then, a contingent of conservatives who were upset with the choice of a moderate jumped behind Doug Hoffman, who ran as a member of the “Conservative Party.” Within a few weeks, the race had become a conduit for the ambitions of national politicians. Sarah Palin, Tim Pawlenty, and Dick Armey separately condemned the district party’s choice, and threw support behind Hoffman. Blogger Michelle Malkin referred to Scozzafava as a “radical leftist GOP candidate,” and suggested that she, not Hoffman, was playing the role of spoiler by sucking away conservative votes needed to defeat the Democrat. Trailing badly in the polls and under attack from national leaders, Scozzafava, who had initially enjoyed the support of the Republican National Committee, dropped out of the race but, tellingly, did not endorse Hoffman. The Democrat, Bill Owens, ultimately won the election with 48% of the vote to Hoffman’s 46%. In a race that had attracted national attention, and was seen by many as a herald of things to come, a Tea Party-backed candidate with help from large, highly conservative donors, had come close to winning a district that, although Republican for decades, was one of the most liberal Republican-dominated districts in the country. Tea Partiers had managed to upset the Republican order. National Republican leaders worried that they had lost control of the party, Tea Party supporters were emboldened, and Democrats did their best to paint the Republican Party as a group that was in the process of being usurped by ultraconservatives.

As the national elections approached, it was clear that Republicans were going to win back seats in the US House, likely in the Senate, and take a few governorships. Midterms are always bad for the incumbent party, and Democrats had won many districts in 2008 that had been in Republican hands for a very long time. Many of the Democrats elected in these districts were fairly conservative—that was one of the reasons the party had trouble corralling its members prior to the healthcare vote. With the economy down and the public holding a generally unfavorable attitude to the Obama administration’s most prominent accomplishments, the question facing Democrats was: how many seats will we lose?

After the New York special election, moderate Republicans were also worried. Conservative commentators like Sarah Palin railed against “RINOs”—Republicans in Name Only—Republican members of Congress who had voted in favor of the bank bailout in 2008 and the fiscal stimulus bill in 2009. Most of these Congressmen faced primary challenges from conservatives who iden-

tified with the Tea Party movement and made federal spending the focus of their campaigns.

In Florida, Governor Charlie Crist announced that he would run for the state's open Senate seat in the fall. The first polls, released in June 2009, put Crist comfortably ahead of his main challenger, Florida House Speaker Marco Rubio, by a margin of 54% to 23%. Crist had been endorsed by the National Republican Senatorial Committee, outgoing Florida Senator Mel Martinez, and John McCain. Rubio's campaign in the Republican primary was almost entirely focused on Crist's support for the stimulus bill and his occasional support for traditionally Democratic causes like environmental regulation. By April 13, Rubio led Crist 56% to 33%, and Crist dropped out of the Republican nominating race, declaring himself an independent. Several major donors refused to support Crist as an independent, and Rubio's endorsements are telling: his largest donor class was retired persons, who contributed over \$1.5 million to his campaign. Rubio also received over \$328,000 from the Club for Growth, an economically conservative political action committee. The Club for Growth also produces a "conservative power ranking," a list of lawmakers whose ideology the club shares. In the top 20 are Michelle Bachmann, Ron Paul, Paul Ryan, and Michigan's own Justin Amash. Rubio ultimately beat Crist by a huge margin—48.9% to 29.7%. Rubio had outraised Crist \$18 million to \$12 million. Rubio's victory, and, more importantly, the narrative around the polls in which he consistently led, suggested that the Tea Party was upending the Republican establishment, and could fundamentally alter the party.

Another of the Club for Growth's favorite sons is Mike Lee, current US Senator from Utah. Utah is notoriously Republican. The only elected official there who is consistently a Democrat is, interestingly, the mayor of Salt Lake City. Despite its conservatism (or perhaps because its conservatism makes the state safe for incumbent Republican senators), it has recently produced the moderately conservative senators Bob Bennett and Orrin Hatch. The Utah Republican Party picks its candidates in a party caucus held in March. Bennett, who had served three terms already, received an endorsement from Mitt Romney at the caucus. It's worth noting that Romney is a hero in Utah: he's the most well-known Mormon in the country, he's a Republican, and he saved the 2002 Salt Lake City Winter Olympics. But Tea Party activists in Utah targeted Bennett. Hundreds, maybe a thousand of them showed up at the caucus, which about 3,500 people attended. Bennett didn't have a chance. He took third in the balloting, receiving 27% of the votes,

and failed to qualify for the Republican primary. Most of the delegates were first-time delegates. Mike Lee finished the caucus in second place, narrowly won the primary, and soundly defeated the Democratic challenger in the general election. Though Lee was seeking office for the first time, he was not a political novice. His father, Rex Lee, was the founding dean of Brigham Young University's Law School, and worked as US Solicitor General under Ronald Reagan. Senator Harry Reid was the Lee family's home teacher. Mike clerked for Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito twice, and had been Utah governor Jon Huntsman's general counsel.

Perhaps the Tea Party's biggest triumph was its role in the election of Rand Paul to a US Senate seat in Kentucky. Here again, the Tea Party victory came at the expense of a more established Republican candidate. The incumbent Senator, Republican Jim Bunning, was pushed into retirement by the Republican Senatorial Committee. The announcement was in July 2009. On August 20, candidate Rand Paul announced that a 24-hour "moneybomb" grassroots fundraising effort had netted him \$430,000. He easily won the Republican primary, then, with the help of over \$6 million in out-of-state contributions, marched to an easy victory in November. It helps to be Ron Paul's son at a time when Representative Paul's ideas are enjoying their greatest popularity in recent memory.

Other races didn't go as well for the Tea Party. Most of the country was shocked when a Rasmussen poll in November 2009 showed that former US Representative and conservative talk show host J.D. Hayworth was tied with John McCain for the Republican nomination in Arizona. As one member of the Minutemen anti-immigration group put it, "we don't trust him" [McCain slide]. McCain quickly beat up on Hayworth. In California, Carly Fiorina and Meg Whitman, wealthy executives who courted Tea Party support (but mostly relied on their personal wealth) lost their bids for Senate and the Governorship.

A closely-fought race between Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid and the Tea Party-backed Sharron Angle ended in a win for Reid. That race was seen by many as a proxy for the nation as a whole. Reid was really the architect of the health care bill's passage. His strategy was to paint Angle as too extreme to be trusted. [clip] Their debate summed up what many saw as the Tea Party's and Democratic Party's respective views of the role of government. Reid earnestly declared, "My job is to create jobs," to which Angle replied "it's not your job to create jobs. It's your job to create policies that create confidence in the private sector so they can create jobs."

Amazingly, Reid and Angle’s campaigns spent nearly the same amount of money—and 80% of the donations were from out-of-state. Reid won by a 5% margin.

In Delaware, the race to succeed Joe Biden took an unexpected turn when a relative unknown, Christine O’Donnell won the Republican primary, despite facing active opposition from the Delaware Republican Party. Her campaign was undeniably weird—she recorded this classic campaign ad—then lost to a Democrat [“Witch” ad slide].

A similar story unfolded in New York, where a developer named Carl Paladino won the Republican primary in a 67–33 landslide with strong support upstate after receiving substantial Tea Party support. Paladino’s candidacy never really recovered from the fact that he sent incredibly offensive emails and was completely insane.

In Alaska, the incumbent Senator Lisa Murkowski lost the Republican primary to Joe Miller, who quickly received an endorsement from Sarah Palin and many Tea Party groups. Murkowski did not withdraw from the race, instead, she launched a write-in campaign and won—narrowly.

Ron Johnson took Russ Feingold’s seat in Wisconsin, in his first run for political office. 64% of his \$8.2 million in campaign contributions came from his own pocket.

By the time the elections were over, it was clear the Republicans had won big. They had six more seats in the Senate than they’d held in 2008, and control of the House passed to them. Democrats had lost 63 seats. Commentators called it a tsunami. But commentators’ job is to make events dramatic. The districts that changed hands were districts in which Obama had performed moderately well. Most of them were districts that had been held by Republicans for a long time prior to 2008, taken in the wave of enthusiasm for Barack Obama that pushed some more contestable districts into the Democratic column. [Tea Party favorability slide].

It was a big win for conservatives. The Tea Party had shaken up the Republican establishment. But a look at who won the senate seats in elections where many believed the Tea Party was decisive reveals people who are not really the kind of ordinary people the Tea Party claimed to represent. Ron Johnson was a millionaire, Mike Lee was one of the most well-connected men in Utah, Rand Paul’s father is a prominent US Representative. The other Senate seats Republicans won weren’t races about the Tea Party. Shaking up the establishment in some places led to disaster—the nominations of Christine O’Donnell and Carl Paladino ended badly for the Republican Party.

And Joe Miller, who had the explicit support of supposed Tea Party heroine Sarah Palin managed to lose to the incumbent despite the fact that to vote for her, one needed to write down her name.

The Tea Party dominated the narrative, but I don't think it can be said that the Tea Party dominated the election. Most Republican winners came from the political establishment, and some were able to use conservative anger to leapfrog past opponents in primaries. Tea Party support was not a guarantee of success, and even candidates who incurred the active wrath of Tea Party favorites failed to win in some races.

3 Who Are These Angry Guys? The Tea Party and Middle America

Mark Lilla uses the image of the Jacobin as a metaphor for the Tea Party's anti-establishment attitude. The use of the Jacobin is a harsh critique—the Jacobins of the French revolution were violent thugs whose political machinations unleashed the Reign of Terror. The term has since been used as a catchall for extreme right-wing movements. Lilla may have gotten the analogy from 1960s press attacks on Barry Goldwater, the Arizona senator whose supporters the press called “Cactus Jacobins” as they attempted to oust presumptive moderate Republican presidential candidate Nelson Rockefeller. That said, Senator Goldwater himself used the term in his manifesto, *The Conscience of a Conservative*, in which he wrote, “throughout history, true Conservatism has been at war equally with autocrats and with ‘democratic’ Jacobins.”

At the bottom of the *New York Review of Books* article page is a link to letters written to Lilla in response to the article, and his responses to those letters. One of the letters came from a professor of French history, who took issue with Lilla's analogy. At the end, he wrote,

“I think Mark Lilla used the Jacobin analogy to suggest a kind of political fanaticism determined to destroy the ancien regime without regard for the consequences. This is not what the Jacobins were or what they did. . . . The so-called *enragés* of the French Revolution are a better analogy. They attacked the Jacobin government, thought they and their friends could run everything better (including the war), had no clear leadership or

organization, accepted no collective discipline, were ferociously individualistic, and beyond much rhetorical posturing had few ideas other than resentment, distrust, and anger.”

Lilla’s response hinges on an idea in his essay that’s easy to miss: he suggests that the Tea Party’s behavior most resembles anti-political Jacobinism—which, he suggests, is what the French Revolutions *enragés* really were: “exterminating angels bred of Jacobinism, not builders of a utopian society.”

We’ve already discussed Lilla’s analysis of the Tea Party. These, I think, are his most important claims. Lilla claims that the American public as a whole is animated by radical individualism. The fight for personal liberty of the 1960s was won; let us call that liberty in the private sphere. That was the fight of the Left in the 1960s. Although in the past few years we have seen some bitter fights over whether to permit gay marriage, the fact that no sodomy laws remain on the books makes that claim credible. Since the 1980s, a desire for economic freedom has also become one of the American public’s animating ideas. Lilla doesn’t really lay out his terms, but I think what he means by economic individualism is the idea that as many economic decisions as possible should be left to individuals. Support for individualism in the economic sphere tends to translate into distrust of public institutions (the government), a desire to reduce taxes, and a belief that one’s lot in life is largely the result of one’s decisions.

According to Lilla, these ideas have been adopted by the public at large, even as the country’s political parties continue to fight along battle lines drawn decades before. The Tea Party is really a populist reaction to this disconnect—an attack on “just about anyone thought to be above.” But it is also a reaction to an idea that I think may be a consequence of the individualist mentality, the belief that “educated elites—politicians, bureaucrats, reporters, but also doctors, scientists, even schoolteachers—are controlling our lives. And they want them to stop.”

From here, Lilla develops the idea of the Tea Party protestor as an “anti-political Jacobin.” Anti-political meaning, not apolitical, but against politics and, probably, against the *polis*, the state. In the first lecture, I mentioned that Rasmussen’s *Mad As Hell*, which sympathizes with the Tea Party, claimed that America was divided between two classes: the mainstreamers and the political class, and the difference between them is whether they trust the government. Mark Lilla’s assessment of the movement’s antipathy towards authority certainly describes Rasmussen’s sentiment.

With anti-political defined, we can move on to Lilla's next claim. It's an important one, and one that I think should be controversial. The Tea Party's grievances are "not a list of political grievances in the conventional sense." Instead, the Tea Party "fires up emotions by appealing to individual opinion, individual autonomy, and individual choice, all in the service of neutralizing, not using political power." What Lilla is trying to say is that the Tea Party movement is not protesting because it wants to receive accommodation, reparations, or recognition from the state. Rather, the Tea Party wants the state to stop doing anything at all. It could be argued that the idea of "small government" is exactly that: the argument that the government should stop doing what it does.

Then comes an interesting point, one I agree with and one that will be clearer after next week. Lilla writes that the current revival of this kind of populism is "nourished by the same libertarian impulses that have unsettled America for half a century now." He's talking about, among others, Barry Goldwater, who, in *Conscience of a Conservative*, famously declared, "I have no interest in streamlining government or in making it more efficient, for I mean to reduce its size." According to Lilla, this ideology "appeals to petulant individuals convinced that they can do everything for themselves if they are only left alone."

Lilla believes that the Tea Party reflects a deep psychological change in American society. The public can now be described as having a blanket distrust of institutions and astonishing—unwarranted—confidence in the self. As he describes them, "apocalyptic pessimists about public life and childlike optimists swaddled in self-esteem when it comes to their own powers." To such people, expertise and authority are inherently suspect.

The financial crisis upset the American public so much because it gave us good reason to think that the ideal of individualism was not always adequate for public life. Mark Lilla suggests that the crisis "broke through the moats we have been building around ourselves and our families, reminding us that certain problems require a collective response through political institutions." His metaphor—a nation of people who have built moats around themselves—resembles the claims of a number of sociologists who have suggested that Americans have increasingly turned inwards and no longer associate with one another as they did in the past. That is the story told in Robert Putnam's Pulitzer-winning book, *Bowling Alone*, and it is either a symptom or a cause of the individualist ethos that Lilla believes characterizes (and distorts) American society. We are, he says, "a nation of cocksure indi-

vidualists who want to be addressed and heard directly, without mediation, and without having to leave the comforts of home.” A protest movement inspired by the celebration of these values will inevitably resemble the Tea Party—a movement that “only exists to express defiance against a phantom threat behind a real political and economic crisis, and to remind those in power that they are there for one thing only: to protect our divine right to do whatever we damn well please.”

If Lilla is right, the Tea Party is simply a manifestation of anger at the fact that political institutions must exist for a state to function. It is based on sentiments that cut across parties to some extent, and it is unlikely to last. It is also only the latest eruption of a libertarian sentiment that has been with us since the 1960s—the era of both the radical left and Barry Goldwater’s stunning presidential run, made possible in large part by young activists of the radical right. Tea Partiers are the inheritors of this individualist, probably extreme right.

Lilla’s explanation leaves me unsatisfied in one respect. Why are they so angry? If Lilla is right, everyone in America has adopted the libertarian ethos, with some variation in the degree to which they apply it to the private and public spheres. But his explanation of why the Tea Partiers are conservatives, and why their anger was kindled by the bailouts, doesn’t quite cut it. Tea Partiers are not Democrats. More importantly, Democrats are not involved in the Tea Party. If this is about a disconnect between the established parties and the population as a whole, we would expect to see people of all stripes joining the Tea Party. Which brings us to the question of what kinds of people join.

They are people who believe the country is on the wrong track. 92% of them think that. According to Zernike, there is “a deep conviction among Tea Party supporters that the country is being run by people who do not share their values, for the benefit of people who are not like them.” This jibes with Lilla’s evaluation, but it also raises in more explicit terms an aspect of the libertarian ideology that he did not talk about: the sense that the institutions of public life restrict economic and personal activity for the purpose of taking the surplus of the successful person’s labor. As one of the supporters said, “I’m the 50 percent that’s paying for the other 50 percent.”

Are they? If Zernike has indeed found them, then they are, in fact, people who pay a larger proportion of their income in taxes: they are better educated and wealthier than the average American, and they are more likely (despite the noise of the protestors) to describe the economic situation as fairly good.

That's because from where they're standing, things aren't so bad. They are white. They tend to be male. That said, they and the Republican party last year nominated a surprisingly large number of women to run in high-profile races. And they are disproportionately above the ages of 45 (46%) and 65 (29%). That age can help us understand their nostalgia—the man who said, “We're tired of this, you guys caused this, and if we don't wake up to this, the American dream we've talked about since the '50s will die. Things we had in the '50s were better.” So they are wealthier than average, and they feel that something has been lost.

So what have we lost? What's wrong with America? Why is the American dream about to die? Perhaps it's President Obama's fault. 88 percent of Tea Party supporters disagreed with his handling of the presidency. When asked to single out why, 10% said they most disapproved of his handling of the health care bill, 19% said they just don't like him, and 11% don't like the fact that he's a socialist. That last sentiment was shared by 2% of non-Tea Party respondents. They are worried, first, about jobs and the economy. A smaller proportion believes that the most important problems facing the country are the federal budget deficit and the government. 96% of them disapprove of the way Congress runs things—23% more than the general population—and almost as many think it's time for new people. That said, about 40% of Tea Partiers think their US Representative is doing just fine. 58% think America's best years are behind us. 45% of the general population agreed. Interestingly, when asked who is most to blame for the current state of the nation's economy, 28% of Tea Partiers blamed Congress, while 15% blamed Wall Street. About a third believe that the stimulus made things worse. Most think it didn't make a difference. Interestingly, only 40% of Tea Party respondents thought the country needed a third political party. 94% say you can almost never trust the government—78% of the general public agreed. When asked to name what made them most angry, the largest number of respondents chose health care, but almost as many were upset by the belief that the government did not represent the people. Only one percent of Tea Party members said that they were most upset by the bank bailouts. They're almost evenly divided on the question of whether the government should cut the deficit or cut taxes. A few more chose taxes. 54% held a favorable opinion of the Republican Party. Only 6% held a favorable view of the Democratic Party. When asked whom they most admired, a plurality chose Newt Gingrich, who, with 10%, edged out Sarah Palin by 1 percentage point. 57% approve of George W. Bush, and 59% have a favorable opinion of Glenn

Beck. Overall, 66% approve of Sarah Palin, though only 40% think she'd be an effective president. Only 24% think Barack Obama understands the needs of people like them; 75% believe that the president does not share the values most Americans try to live by. 92% think he is moving the country towards socialism, and 56% believe his policies favor the poor. They're fairly certain—64% of them agree—that Obama has raised taxes on most Americans.

One of the most interesting results shows that views of the Tea Party diverge quite a bit from the mainstream on the subject of assistance to the poor: 73% of Tea Party respondents agreed that providing government benefits to the poor encouraged them to remain poor. 38% of the general populace agreed. More than anything else, they are animated by economic issues: 78% say they are more concerned about economic issues than they are about social issues. While 80% believe illegal immigration is a serious problem, they are wary of open-carry firearms laws.

They diverge sharply from the general populace on another question: 52% of Tea Party respondents believes that in recent years, “too much has been made of the problems facing black people.” 28% of the population agrees. Interestingly, 53% think the *Roe v. Wade* decision was a bad thing for the country, though overall, Tea Party supporters don't differ too much from the general population on what changes should be made to abortion policy.

Interestingly, but perhaps not surprisingly, 84% of Tea Party supporters believe that the Tea Party reflects the views of most Americans; 25% of the general population agrees. Only 20% of the Tea Party respondents had actually attended a rally or donated money. 47% of the supporters said they got their information about the movement from television. 45% believe the primary goal of the movement should be to reduce the role of the federal government.

Here's an interesting one: 43% say they have been active in a political campaign—activity defined as worked for a candidate or party or donating money. 66% say they always or usually vote Republican, while 25% claim to vote equally for Democrats and Republicans. Only 54% consider themselves Republican. That 25% is probably not right about its own behavior. David Magleby's voting studies showed that most self-identified independent voters actually almost always voted for the same party. 63% of Tea Party respondents say they get their news from Fox News Channel, and 53% think of Glenn Beck and his counterpart Sean Hannity as *news* shows (24% of the population agrees).

70% say that their financial situation is “fairly good,” though 55% have

said that the recession had made things “difficult.” Half as many were out of work, and a third as many were not in the work market. Twice as many were retired. While 33% of the population reported having children over the age of 18, 53% of Tea Party supporters said that they had adult children. They were most likely to report an income between \$50,000 and \$75,000, and 20% said their income exceeded \$100,000. 59% identified themselves as male.

What about the Middle American?

Why did I ask you to read about the Middle American? Hell, who is the Middle American? One of the lines I thought mattered a lot in the *Time* piece was this:

“The American dream that they were living was no longer the dream as advertised. They feared that they were beginning to lose their grip on the country. Others seemed to be taking over—the liberals, the radicals, the defiant young, a communications industry that they often believed was lying to them.”

Not only that, *Time* tells us that they have felt ignored—minorities dominated the government’s action—they felt like they weren’t being represented in Washington, and they think that their taxes are going to other people. What else? How about this line: “Like many middle Americans, Nixon reflected what would have traditionally seemed a contradictory mixture of liberal and conservative impulses.” Of course, his liberal impulses were SALT, the draft lottery, and guaranteed annual wages. And if Lilla is right, and David Brooks was right when he compared the Tea Party to hippies, then one thing has certainly changed: “Nixon, John Mitchell, and Spiro Agnew minister to and play upon the discontent of Middle America by conjuring up the imperatives of discipline and restraint.” They don’t believe they are biased against members of other races, or the poor. Reading Coles’ account of the factory worker, you get a complicated view—people angry about government handouts but respectful, friends with the black line worker next to them. So their brand of conservatism is gone. But their thoughts on government, maybe not so different: “nothing seems to work properly any more. . . bureaucracies make the system function, but they meddle in private lives.”

Are Tea Partiers the shouting non-shouters? The loud Middle Americans? Or are they something else? Are they Middle Americans after three more

decades of prosperity, angry at the rudeness with which their consumption patterns were altered by the Great Recession?

4 *Barry Goldwater and Republican Insurgencies*

Mr. Conservative: Conscience of a Movement

Barry Goldwater's aim in writing *Conscience of A Conservative* was to lay out a true conservative philosophy and, hopefully through that exercise alone, inspire others to action in the service of conservatism. His message resonated with many people. Enough that, as you might have noticed in the Perlstein book, the *Los Angeles Times* gave Senator Goldwater a column. *Conscience* inspired people like William Buckley and the college-aged conservatives of Young Americans for Freedom to agitate for true conservatism, and fight for Goldwater's place on the ticket.

What was conservatism, according to the Senator? "The Conservative approach is nothing more or less than an attempt to apply the wisdom and experience of the past to the problems of today." One of his most important rhetorical moves is to reject the idea that liberals are fundamentally more interested in people, while conservatives are motivated solely by economic considerations. He puts it rather bluntly: "Conservatism is not an economic theory." Then, he refers to socialism (equating modern liberalism and conservatism in the casual way that also characterizes much current Republican rhetoric), pointing out—correctly—that "it is socialism that subordinates all other considerations to man's material well-being."

One of the threads that runs throughout *Conscience* sounds like Republicans and Tea Partiers today, this is the idea that there are legitimate actions government can pursue, but that the constitution was written to restrict the number of actions that are in fact legitimate, and thus many of the federal government's actions are illegitimate. Along with this idea of illegitimacy comes the sense that freedom—which these limits were meant to protect—is under assault. Conservatism of this sort sees an encroaching state. It is easy to see how this world view could appeal to paranoiacs, or could nudge the suspicious in paranoia's general direction.

What about taxes? From the celebration of individual dignity at the opening, we know that individual action is revered in this system. With this

celebration comes a celebration of individual effort in all spheres, especially the economic sphere. In Bastiat, whom we'll read next week, you will find a similar treatment, or elevation, of individual property rights. Property rights are the basis of freedom in this version of the libertarian ethic. Thus, on page 60, we see this logic: "How can he be free if the fruits of his labor are not his to dispose of, but are treated, instead, as part of a common pool of public wealth?" Which leads to the conclusion: "Property and freedom are inseparable: the extent government takes the one in the form of taxes, it intrudes on the other."

Listen to this excerpt from page 35.

"Despite the recent holding by the Supreme Court, I am firmly convinced—not only that integrated schools are not required—but that the Constitution does not permit any interference whatsoever by the federal government in the field of education. It may be just or wise or expedient for negro children to attend the same schools as white children, but they do not have a federal right to do so which is protected by the federal constitution, or which is enforceable by the federal government."

Put aside for a moment the racial dimension. What is Senator Goldwater saying about situations in which inequality exists, in which it is possible to demonstrate that some harm will in the absence of federal intervention? His assertion is that even if the federal government is capable of intervening, it should not. Even if federal action would be required to correct discrimination in schools, because "no powers regarding education were given the federal government," the federal government must not act.

Goldwater on Civil Rights

More troublesome, but still worth thinking about in specific, legal terms, is his general claim about civil rights on page 33:

"Unless a right is incorporated in the law, it is not a civil right and is not enforceable by the instruments of the civil law. There may be some rights—'natural,' 'human,' or otherwise—that should also be civil rights. But if we desire to give such rights the protection of the law, our recourse is to a legislature or to the amendment procedures. We must not look to politicians, or sociologists—or the courts—to correct the deficiency."

This is an interesting legal claim; it is also problematic in a country with common law. For those of you who are unfamiliar with the term, many laws in the United States are not part of a code per se. The definitions of crimes have been developed in the opinions of judges, which have in turn been, and this is more and more the case, compiled into codes. Goldwater claims that judges can have no role in the creative process. Yet in a common law system, they must. When a plaintiff asserts a novel wrong, or a defendant makes a novel defense, it is the judge, and ultimately the justices of the Supreme Court, who decide whether that claim or defense may be considered a valid one in the future. So Goldwater does not understand the common law.

It is interesting that he argues against allowing courts to rectify deficiencies. The whole point of a court is to adjudicate claims. One makes recourse to the court precisely in order to have one's rights, property, civil, or custodial, protected. Goldwater says that the courts' holdings in civil rights cases invented rights out of whole cloth. He believes that the legislature (though he specifically excludes 'politicians') and the amendment process are the sole means by which new rights can be asserted and therefore entered into the list of rights that must be protected. This assertion quite closely follows Goldwater's praise of the constitution's authors for their choice to set the amendment bar high. Rights must be approved by the people, through a process that requires a large majority of the people to sign on. Over and over again, most especially on page 34, Goldwater's claim is that the federal government (and federal courts) may not do anything that is not specifically granted to them in codified law or, really, the constitution. Even recognizable injustices are not to be adjudicated by the federal courts unless federal rights are involved. He is, in effect, calling for the neutering of the federal system. Even in cases of manifest injustice, the court must be bound by a rigid (and quite possibly arbitrary) standard that prohibits it from even deciding whether or not it may act.

Using historical evidence, he argues that because at the same time the Fourteenth Amendment was written, segregated schools were in common practice, it is clear that "the amendment was not intended to, and therefore it did not outlaw racially separate schools." He follows the same line of thought to conclude that "It was not intended to, and therefore it did not, authorize any federal intervention in schools."

Conscience on Welfare and the Constitution

Goldwater's argument about the role of the court in American life is one we hear often, and one that is really a way to attack decisions of the court that one disagrees with. He writes, "The Constitution is what its authors intended it to be and said it was—not what the Supreme Court says it is." The thing that makes this way of thinking radical, even revolutionary, is its rejection of the idea that the courts should be capable of producing novel solutions to novel cases. Goldwater attacks the right of the court to intervene in disputes not foreseen by the constitution.

Goldwater's take on the welfare state plays to the paranoid fear of creeping socialism. Welfare is unnecessary, because America is a rich nation, but a cabal of Welfarists "have learned that Socialism can be achieved quite as well through Nationalization." The ultimate goal of these welfarists is to subordinate the individual to the State. Welfare, he says, puts the welfaree at the mercy of the state "by divesting him of the means to provide for his personal needs." What makes welfare so insidious is that it "transforms the individual from a dignified, industrious, self-reliant spiritual being into a dependent animal creature without his knowing it." Welfare creates dependence, enslaves recipients, renders them less human, and gives him a sense of entitlement, while removing from charity the spiritual element that makes giving a noble act.

Perlstein on Goldwater's Legacy

Perlstein touches on Goldwater's foreign policy ideas, dwelling on his desire to roll back communism. He's right to suggest Goldwater's evocation of the nobility of the fight was a key part of what made *Conscience* so inspirational. I think there's something about the celebration of individuality in Goldwater that really does appeal, especially to the young, the relatively affluent, those with good prospects. Some of you might be familiar with the philosopher Nietzsche; I do not think that he and Goldwater have much in common ideologically, except for their lofty descriptions of the individual, which cause both to appeal to a certain kind of young person. Ayn Rand's writing has some of the same appeal—it says that boldness, action, and self-reliance are the keys to the world.

The other important thing in Perlstein was the description of Buckley. William F. Buckley is a classic example of a political specimen that no longer

exists: the East coast, patrician Republican. It used to be that the Northeast was the dominant faction in the Republican party. Nelson Rockefeller of New York is the classic Republican presidential candidate of the time. Buckley fits right into this mold. But he's also a young radical. Like other radicals of the sixties, he is an intellectual. He's an organizer and a brazen iconoclast. He's also at the forefront of a massive student movement. That student movement begins to agitate for him. Goldwater is their hero. Phyllis Schlafly, one of the principle Republican activists of the 1970s wrote a book about Goldwater called *A Choice Not An Echo*, and Dick Armey's book about the Tea Party opens with a reminder that Goldwater was "a voice not an echo." I'm not sure if that's a misprint or an error or exactly what he meant. The key here is that dozens of young Republicans who would go on to important careers got their start in Republican politics through Young Americans for Freedom. They started reading *The New Republic*, Buckley's serious, intellectually weighty magazine. YAF was an insurgent force in the party. It was new activists. It disrupted the machine. Ultimately, it stole the primary from Nixon.

Goldwater got the nomination and then he foundered. Lyndon Johnson was held in high regard by many Americans who sympathized with the Texan and his sudden ascent to power. The Vietnam war had not reached fever pitch in 1963. And Goldwater's inspiring take on the Cold War, the "let's march" ethos that had inspired so many YAFers, scared most Americans. [ad slide] "In your heart, you know he's right," was his slogan. "In your guts, you know he's nuts" was the Johnson campaign's pugnacious retort. Ads like this [daisy clip] revolutionized TV politicking—and destroyed Goldwater's campaign. So, too, did his vote against the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Interestingly, the Arizona senator had voted for every other piece of pro-civil rights legislation. It was the 1964 law's interference with states' rights that put him off. That vote played well in the Deep South... and nowhere else. Goldwater's devastating loss was one of the worst in the history of US presidential elections. Johnson won by a margin the US hadn't seen since 1820.

With Goldwater's defeat, he effectively exited the national political scene. His acolytes did not. Buckley became a nationally televised commentator. [Buckley clip] Many YAFers moved into the camp of a telegenic California governor, Ronald Reagan. Goldwater's ideas are, I think, the ideas of the current iteration of the Republican party. His concept of deleveraging the federal government, his commitment to reducing its size, his excoriation of

both parties' failure to rein in spending, and, most of all, his commitment to individual rights as the basis of his small-government philosophy became the language of the non-religious Right. Perlstein's book is called *Before the Storm* because it is describing America before the most turbulent year—1968, and before the postwar consensus, the postwar commitment to government intervention, before trust in the government, now at a nadir, had begun its decline. Goldwater is one side of the coin, half of the storm.

Mad as Hell describes briefly how a new breed of economists was challenging the role of government in the economy. I should mention that Milton Friedman's most important contribution to the economic literature was actually showing how the Federal Reserve could have lessened the impact of the Great Depression by intervening to expand the money supply. That said, the fact that inflation and joblessness were by this time growing simultaneously, showed that the previous generation's understanding of the market was flawed. Note the connection Sandbrook makes between libertarians and hippies. "If not bedfellows, they were propping up the same late-night bar." Note also the presence of the billionaire Charles Koch—the Koch brothers' father.

What happened in California is quite interesting. Howard Jarvis had been around for quite some time. He'd tried to get his anti-tax policies through several times, but was unsuccessful. Then a real estate boom in California created a tax crisis: housing prices jumped quickly. With an increase in house price comes an increase in property taxes. Many people were paying much higher property taxes on their homes without actually getting any benefit from the increased value: you had to sell the home or take out a home equity loan to see any of that cash, and home equity loans were quite rare in the 1970s, while selling meant you had to move, presumably to somewhere else with overvalued real estate. Property taxes in Los Angeles were assessed every two years. Jarvis got a lucky break when the assessments for Los Angeles were released mid-campaign, and hundreds of thousands of people saw their tax bills double or more overnight. So they voted for Proposition 13. And California began a slow ride towards insolvency that is hopefully at its worst today.

In Jarvis, you have a great example of a populist campaign that appeals to voters right where it counts—their pocketbooks. Proposition 13 won because of a housing bubble and a tax crisis that bubble provoked. Yet in the end, it was probably not in the best interests of California voters. Nonetheless, it set in motion a series of tax cuts and legitimated an intellectual realm that

had become increasingly important since Goldwater and Friedman (Friedman was Goldwater's economics advisor during the 1964 race) and paved the way for a new set of economic hacks like, if you read that far, Jude Wanniski. For tax cuts to produce productivity gains large enough to produce over time a net increase in tax receipts, tax rates must be punitively high. They must be incredibly high. They must be far higher than they have ever been in the United States. Jude Wanniski liked to brag that he discovered supply-side economics at a restaurant and could sketch the theory on the back of a napkin. We shouldn't use a theory that simplistic to guide our national economic policy. Friedman's claims were quite different from those of the so-called "supply-siders." What's important here is that California, often a bellwether of national trends, struck out on the path blazed by Goldwater. They revolted against taxes. The problem was that, unlike Goldwater, they didn't really bother to shrink the government. The anti-tax sentiment of Goldwater libertarianism began to infiltrate national policy. The language of small government, pioneered by Goldwater, the language of personal liberty, became the justification for these tax cuts. But Goldwater's other aim was to reduce the role of the government. You could say that that legacy was betrayed. That's exactly what Dick Armey says. That's exactly what Ron Paul says. That's exactly what Robert Rasmussen says. You hear many of the same kinds of things from Tea Partiers today. Goldwater set in motion the non-religious middle class wing of the Republican party. The tax revolt was the first time a popular movement acted out some of that ideology's guiding principles. Much of what we hear from the Tea Party is based on Goldwater. If we look at the ages of Tea Party supporters many above 65, almost half 45 or older, and we consider the life stories of its leaders, noting that many leaders were politically aware, and most had already a strong Republican identity, it makes sense that Goldwater has become a touchstone. I think it is fair to say that his campaign, and the energy around it, the youth it attracted, was the foundation of the kind of economic thinking we now call Republican. Tea Partiers are Republicans. It seems to me that many of them are second-generation Goldwaterites, too young to have participated in the campaign, but old enough to have heard hundreds of speeches by people who drew their first political inspiration from Goldwater's message.

5 The Libertarian Ethos: Bastiat, Rand, Paul

Bastiat's *Law*

I'd like to start today's lecture by talking about Bastiat's *The Law*. This book was originally published as a pamphlet in 1850, and it is very much a work of what we today call Classical Liberalism. Liberalism in the US today means something very different from what Bastiat describes, as I hope you noticed. Classical liberalism was a set of ideas premised on the belief that the protection of personal freedom—liberty, or *libertas*, hence liberalism—should be the primary goal of law and society. The liberalism of the Democratic Party and the conservatism of the Republican Party are really two different forms of classical liberalism. That's right, we're all liberals now. The political division today has its roots pretty early on in the development of classical liberalism. It wasn't quite around when John Locke was working on the ideas that became central tenets of liberalism, but by John Stuart Mill, a brilliant prodigy created, basically, by an experiment of his also brilliant utilitarianist father, you start to see two strains of thought within liberalism. The divergence was over the question of whether the state should interfere with one's freedom to contract in order to protect that person from exploitation. Thomas Hill Greene argued that the state should make some kinds of contracts illegal so that an individual without the capacity to, say, read, or who lacked good judgment, would not be able to give up his liberty. Not everyone agreed. For another group, freedom of contract meant freedom to sign anything—freedom to give up one's liberty if one so chose. So those are the two schools of liberal thought that led us in part to today. The classic formulation of liberalism in politics is the idea that people should be free to live their life, enjoy their liberty, and pursue property. That should sound familiar: life, liberty, and the pursuit of property.

Bastiat begins with a kind of classic attention-grabbing announcement: “The law perverted!” followed by a hint of paranoia: “the police powers of the state perverted along with it.” We are informed right off the bat that God created man and life and we are told what man is: he is “life faculties, production—in other words, individuality, liberty, property.” These are from God—it is not for man, or man-made states, to act upon them. In addition, these three requirements depend on one another to the point that they are interchangeable, as Bastiat asks, “What is property but the extension of our faculties?” Law is derived from these requirements, and is, or ought to be,

nothing more than the collective organization of the right to defend one's life, liberty, and property.

A world in which the state and the law were nothing more than the organization of the right to defend one's life, liberty, and property, would be more rational, Bastiat tells us. In a society based on the principle that the law existed to protect individuals' right to property, "everyone would understand that he possessed all the privileges as well as all the responsibilities of his existence." This would make things better; our society would function better if everyone understood this: "thanks to the non-interference of the state in private affairs, our wants and satisfactions would develop themselves in a logical manner." And in the nineteenth century, rational was in many ways a synonym of perfect, it meant rightly organized, good. In other words, if the government simply went away, except for when it was needed to protect me from thieves, society would become the society it ought to be. Like Goldwater's thesis on the courts, Bastiat has created a system that imposes only negative restraints on the government. Bastiat has not, or does not, consider that there might be positive obligations on the state except, and this is only implied, to have the institutions in place necessary to protect property rights.

To me, Bastiat's vision of the relationship between the individual and the state is completely dichotomous: either one is completely responsible for one's success, or the government is completely responsible. This is the practical effect of his insistence that one should not have to say that the government had a hand in your success.

From there, Bastiat develops his idea of plunder. One of the things I find interesting here is that Bastiat admits that greed is part of human nature, and that it is very difficult for a group of people to not see in the state an opportunity to plunder. The aristocratic rich plunder from the poor, and the deprived poor seek to plunder the rich. Ultimately, the state must be the organ that reins this in, and that in turn can be done only by granting the state power to defend property but not cause it to change hands. If the state is not limited, it will become an instrument of plunder. And really, it already has. Bastiat sees a weak state as the antidote to human greed. He does not believe that greediness is good, for in his mind, it is human rapacity that has distorted the state into a dangerous entity. In his world, human greed is a constant, and has and will continue to cause injustice in the form of violations of the rights to property, life, and liberty. The state must be altered so that human greed cannot act through the state to cause harm by

violating the God-given right to property. The state must be neutered so that it cannot become a tool of greed, for limiting the extent to which greed can plunder is the first way in which a state can stop greed.

So from there, I'd like to move on to Ayn Rand. I wanted to end the discussion of Bastiat with the idea that his world is completely bipolar, the idea that society must either be completely free of government interference, and government action to restrain the taking of wealth, or it is in a state of complete plunder where no personal responsibility exists.

Ayn Rand

Jonathan Chait, University of Michigan alum, *Michigan Daily* writer, and founder of the *Michigan Independent* fills us in on Rand's biographical details. Aren't they fascinating?

Let's talk about *Atlas Shrugged*. First, in the interest of full disclosure, let me be clear in saying that I do not like the book. I find Rand's writing tedious and uninspired, I find her ideas half-baked and less than compelling, and I find her moral philosophy morally repugnant. The book is longer than *War and Peace* but has far less content and is far less compelling. Her characters are not people but props, which is fine for a short novel (has anyone ever read *The Jungle*?) but is excruciating over something like 650,000 words.

Atlas Shrugged offers readers a world of absolutes, to borrow Whittaker Chambers' words, another telling of that fairy tale in which the Children of Light do battle with the Children of Darkness. But this time, the conflict of values is a totally materialist one. Jumping ahead of myself for a moment, I want to point out Chait's contribution with respect to what I just said. I just said that Ayn Rand's values conflict is materialistic. The moral structure of her fiction universe is materialistic. Does that strike anyone as strange? In general, I would argue that the moral currency of a materialist philosophy is what one might call utilitarian, or maybe functional. That is, the logical arguments that are made from materialist premises tend to emphasize the importance of quantifying and maximizing social good. The right thing to do is the one that most benefits society, or provides the greatest good to the greatest number of people, to borrow the classic criterion from the utilitarianists.

Ayn Rand's books speak a different moral language. The muscular morality of *Atlas Shrugged* is, or perhaps helps create, a war between good and evil. Chambers is right to give us the hint that there is something Biblical about

this conflict. But although the children of light and the children of darkness are at war with one another, *Atlas Shrugged* rejects both the selfless, ascetic Christian ethic of the New Testament and the murky obedience of the Old. In their place is a simpler morality tale: an allegory that preaches money as the highest ideal—proof of the strength of the person who acquired it. Those who value other things are, according to Rand, guilty of both weakness and jealousy. Money is the sole good, the only thing that anyone will ever aspire to have. Possessing money is proof of virtue, and virtue here means the strength to acquire wealth.

Rand's world is a watered-down (materialist) version of the one Nietzsche crafted as he descended into madness. In *Atlas Shrugged*, Rand created her own *Beyond Good and Evil*: a modern celebration of strength and a denigration of those who deny strength (and intelligence) their due as moral virtues. *Atlas Shrugged* is more than this, it is in many ways Nietzsche's famous last work. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, shorn of subtlety, without anything approaching Nietzsche's fascinating, impenetrable wordplay. Rand's sentences are like her characters: muscular and contemptuous, possessed of large vocabularies and simple minds. Here, a character describes the relief he feels as he enters a grand office building—picture the interior of Rockefeller Center, if you've been there, or the Chrysler building, "This was a place of competence and power," he thinks as Rand blandly describes the fixtures, "Whenever he entered the Taggart Building, he felt relief and a sense of security." So much of the book is like that: it's easy to understand because the arguments are straightforward and unsubtle. Her characters, as Chambers points out, are stock character, but also, they are Nietzsche's characters: the Overman, the Last Man, and the Prophet, here "twisted beyond recognition."

Nietzsche's invocations of a higher morality not rooted in tradition (and his guilty announcement that God had died), his enticing description of a better kind of man, and his celebration of strength all appeal to the bookish adolescent who finds in Nietzsche an overwrought, emotional attack on restrictions, alongside a celebration of the self at a time when the reader, too, is challenging the boundaries of acceptable conduct. For this kind of smart young person, especially one who has not yet experienced real disappointment and has no sense of his own mortality, this view is intoxicating. When all the future lies before you, it seems possible, even likely that you will be the person who will triumph by flouting convention. You do not need the tired strictures of the ancient institutions, aging adults, and hypocritical people who hold the power. Nietzsche speaks to this sentiment. Or at least

he seems to. Rand speaks to the same sentiments, and the person most likely to read *Atlas Shrugged* in its entirety is the kind of alienated young man who finds in her the iconoclastic, supremely self-confident inner monologue that he is too shy to really express. There's something about being 17 and bookish and misunderstood that makes you sure, as you read Nietzsche or Rand, that YOU are Nietzsche's Overman, that you ARE John Galt, that it will be you who transforms society.

In Rand's world, God is most assuredly dead. Corporate life, grand enterprises, and the manifestation of power in grand commercial structures replace nature and God. Chambers is right to when he says, "Randian man, like Marxian man, is at the center of a Godless world." Although she tirelessly works to discredit god and religion as traps for the less-creative and the non-independent, her bifurcated world in full of grand symbolism, where the stakes are as high as they have ever been (the world will stop when the main characters strike). Her methods suggest a desire to find in materialism a perfect substitute for hollowed out religion. She seems to want a complete moral structure, and she formulates one: Faith in greed over faith in God. Yet the implications of faith in greed sometimes resemble those of faith in God. Her story revels in the undemocratic idea that those who are best must and should rule. This is a kind of materialist Calvinism: some were chosen, they will be saved, and they should rule. The tautological logic of the Calvinist leaders, their claim that their position was proof they had been saved, is the same as Rand's: the riches of the great people, their high positions, prove that they are great.

On the final page, we find a section of great importance to the kinds of libertarians we see today. One Judge Narragansett is described as "mathematical" in his decisions, that is, a judge who draws from the body of the law only those things which flow obviously from simple formulas. He, at the end of the book, "sat at a table, and the light of his lamp fell on the copy of an ancient document. He had marked and crossed out the contradictions in its statements that had once been the cause of its destruction. He was now adding a new clause to its pages: 'Congress shall make no law abridging the freedom and production of trade.'" Here we have that founder-centric view of the constitution, a celebration of the original document. With it comes the idea of the judge as an adding machine. When a case appears, the judge simply takes the sum of its parts and finds the relevant statute, no thinking required. Here, too, we see Rand suggesting that the producer, or the trader, ought to be effectively lawless under the constitution.

In his final speech, the character John Galt tells us that the trader is the highest kind of man. He is the only one who operates on principles of justice, the only one who does not use the language of morality to prevent man from being man. Naked exchange is the highest form of human activity.

If you don't believe me, let me quote from the section I asked you to read, the quotes here come from one of the characters Chambers made fun of, a Chilean copper magnate named Francisco Domingo Carlos Andres Sebastian d'Anconia, who lays things out pretty clearly:

- “The common bond between men. . . is the exchange of goods.”
- “You look on and you cry that money corrupted him. Did it? Or did he corrupt his money?”
- “To love money is to know and love the fact that money is the creation of the best power within you.”
- “Money is the barometer of a society’s virtue”
- “The highest type of human being—the self-made man—the American industrialist”
- “A country of money—and I have no higher, more reverent tribute to pay to America, for this means: a country of reason, justice, freedom, production, achievement.”
- “The words ‘to make money’ hold the essence of human morality.”
- “Until and unless you discover that money is the root of all good, you ask for your own destruction.”

Galt gives us an insight into how someone who accepts Rand's ideas (he is one of her props, after all) will see the world: “There is no causeless wealth,” he informs us in a statement that accompanies attacks on “looters” and “beggars.” It seems he thinks the converse may also be true: “there is no causeless poverty.” The poor, we learn, are poor because of ‘unwillingness or inability.’ Chait suggests that Rand's ideas mirrored Marx's and had a lot in common with religion. I think that in this section, we can see a Randian theory of sin. The two qualities that cause poverty, unwillingness and inability, render a person worthy, if not to damnation, then to subjugation.

Whittaker Chambers picks up on this in his *National Review* review of the book. His writing is funny—did you get the line, “in this story, all the knights marry the princess.” I think he’s right on track with his comparisons of Marxian thought and Randian thought—both completely materialistic, “man at the center of a godless world.” I think his most insightful comment is his skewering of the simplistic world Rand inhabits. Here’s the long quote that really impressed me,

“Calling the whole lot of them looters enables the author to skewer on one invective word everything and everybody that she fears and hates. This spares her the plaguey business of performing one service that her fiction might have performed, namely: that of examining in human depth how so feeble a lot came to exist at all, let alone be powerful enough to be worth hating and fearing. Instead, she bundles them into one undifferentiated damnation.”

Rand’s Legacy

Rand makes acquisitiveness, greed, the pursuit and gain of money, into the “highest” of all human activities. Her argument is not functional. It isn’t about how to maximize social good (which I think Bastiat’s was), it’s closer to a religious assertion that x is good and y is a sin. For a long time, conservatives argued that their policies should be followed because they had the best ideas on how to enrich society—a utilitarian justification. The new claim is that the conservative economic agenda is a moral agenda: the rights of the producers must not be restricted, and it would be an outrage to humanity to restrict producers’ rights in any way. This producer ethos is really important for understanding the Tea Party. The idea that a whole class of people contributes nothing to society resonates with many others.

The influence Rand exerts is real. Alan Greenspan, we learn from Chait, wrote of her “what she did... was to make me think that capitalism is not only efficient and practical, but also moral.” Her book continues to sell well. And her own attitude sums up the attitude of many who love her: “No one helped me, nor did I think at any time that it was anyone’s duty to help me.” Last week I tried to show how many of the things the Tea Party talks about are echoes of the Barry Goldwater campaign. Rand’s ideas exert a much more concrete influence on the movement. People talk about her, they buy

her books; I haven't heard many Tea Partiers say that they are objectivists, but you will find Rand's books listed on the recommended reading lists at a number of Tea Party sites. "That's what freedom is all about, taking your own risks."

6 The Paranoid Style

I'd like to begin today's lecture by revisiting the topic from last week. I had a lot to say about Ayn Rand's book, and I'm worried that the most important part of the content may have gotten lost, in part because I discussed my opinion about the book's literary merits and also because the critical sources I included presented a completely negative picture. What I hope you got from the book excerpt and from the critiques was an understanding of how Rand and the Randian world view see money. The book says that money is a measure of virtue—a way of calculating moral good. The dramatic conflict in that book is a fight over money, specifically over the allocation of money in society. That by itself is nothing extraordinary. Many books, political tracts, polemics, have been written about how to best distribute money in society. Such authors nearly always advance their claims with further claims that we can call "instrumental," that is, concerned with the value such a distribution of wealth will bring to some group. The standard that these authors use to judge their claims is almost always "utilitarian," that is, they are claims based on the principle that decisions should be made if they bring maximum benefit, or maximum utility, to some group, generally, to society at large. It is less common to see an author argue that money has a moral character, which I think Rand does claim. The whole of *Atlas Shrugged* is an allegorical presentation of the principles that follow from this root claim, that money has moral value. The story attempts to show that our current world does not conform to the fully moral one in which we ought to live, a world in which the best among us are able to accumulate the massive wealth that is their due for being great. Alan Greenspan's letter said it very well: "What she did—through long discussions and lots of arguments into the night—was to make me think why capitalism is not only efficient and practical, but also moral." Jonathan Chait called this "laissez-faire capitalism as an ethical system."

Before we move on to the paranoid style, I'd like to show you one clip, from a Republican party presidential debate a few weeks ago. What Repre-

sentative Paul expresses is not a direct channeling of Ayn Rand, but, first, it is important to know that Ron Paul and his supporters have been powerfully influenced by Ayn Rand—does anyone know the name of the junior senator from Kentucky? Clearly, Mr. Paul is a Randian. What he says here is a good summary of the form Ayn Rand’s economic ideas have taken today. [debate clip]

Now, let’s talk about Hofstadter. What is Hofstadter’s mission? What does he say is the point of an essay like “The Paranoid Style”? Is this an essay about how power is distributed and the institutions our society uses to distribute that power? No, this is an essay about “the milieu of our politics,” about how people “respond to civic issues, make them their own, put them to work on national problems, and express their response to these problems in a distinctive rhetorical style.” Before we go further into what he suggests are the defining characteristics of the style, we should establish what Hofstadter is actually writing about.

Who is this essay about? McCarthy. Who is McCarthy? And the John Birch Society, which we mentioned briefly before. Does anyone recall from the Perlstein reading what the John Birch society was? (Blue Book pp. 1, 3, 14.)

Now, according to Hofstadter, the paranoid style, that way of speaking and, presumably, thinking about the world, is characterized by a number of characteristics. That is, users of the paranoid style tend to speak about the world in similar ways. They tend to “secularize a religiously derived view of the world,” which he says means that they borrow from “the dark symbology of a certain side of Christian tradition.” Hofstadter compares it to Manichaeism, which was an early Christianity with a dualistic view of creation—the term means a truly black and white view of the world, usually accompanied with a sense of eternal struggle between the two. So there is what he calls an “Evil influence,” and that evil influence is on the verge of bringing about “a terrible social apocalypse.” But with that belief comes another, the idea that this enemy could be defeated in a final, climactic battle.

What makes the user of the paranoid style different from the paranoiac? How is he not delusional, at least, what makes his perspective different from the deluded paranoid person? The person’s belief that some group’s way of life is under attack—the conspiracy is against all of us, not just the user of the style. The paranoid style always describes a certain kind of institution, actually, it requires the presupposition of “a vast, insidious, preternaturally

effective international conspiratorial network designed to perpetrate acts of the most fiendish character.”

The enemy is powerful, the enemy is everywhere, and the enemy is out to destroy our way of life.

In the paranoid view of the present Hofstadter describes, three events stand out as way stations on the path to our current dire predicament. Those three points are the New Deal, which was, they say, a conspiracy to place the economy under the control of the federal government. Then comes a conspiracy by communists to infiltrate the federal government, fuelled by the “loss” of China to the communists and the well-publicized McCarthy hearings. Finally, it envisions a vast network of communist agents within the various media, in education, among the press, all working together to paralyze the resistance of loyal Americans.

In the end, Hofstadter argues that the paranoid worldview sees conspiracies as “the motive force in history.” Everything that happens happens because this, remember that term, “preternaturally effective,” organization was working to make it happen. Thus, as you’ll see in the clip, phenomena that most people would attribute to large-scale historical forces largely outside of human control, the paranoid attributes to deliberate action on the part of vastly powerful, totally hidden people.

“The paranoid spokesman sees the fate of his conspiracy in apocalyptic terms—he traffics in the birth and death of whole worlds, whole political orders, whole systems of human values. He is constantly manning the barricades of civilization. . . . Time is forever just running out.”

The final piece of the paranoid style is a reverence for evidence, imitation of the scholarly form, that leads to a grand, unexpected, and, really, unsupported inference. Hofstadter captures this with his description of the anti-Illuminati writer: “For page after page he patiently records the details he has been able to accumulate about the history of the organization. Then, suddenly, the French Revolution has taken place, and the Illuminati have brought it about.”

This is a common trait among those who see conspiratorial forces operating through history—some of you, who’ve had conversations with people who claim that 9/11 was an inside job or that the Kennedy assassination was the work of the FBI, might have seen someone present mountains of evidence then make a leap that doesn’t really follow.

There is a lot here that I think resembles a certain kind of religious mindset. Specifically, the unwillingness to attribute historical phenomena to things like chance. Hofstadter points out that “The paranoid mentality is far more coherent than the real world, since it leaves no room for mistakes, failures, or ambiguities.” There are many religious people who also express discomfort with the idea that what goes on in the world—but with the religious, the concern is more often with an individual life—could be the result of chance. I don’t bring this up to suggest that people of faith are paranoid. In general, they are not. I bring it up because we’re about to take a look at Glenn Beck, who I’m showing because I think he exemplifies what Hofstadter is talking about. Before I talk about him I want you to think about a particular line from Hofstadter that can tell us a lot about the characteristics of the style:

“Any historian of warfare knows that it is in good part a comedy of errors and a museum of incompetence; but if for every error and every act of incompetence one can substitute an act of treason, we can see how many points of fascinating interpretation are open to the paranoid imagination. . . . In the end the real mystery, for one who reads the primary works of paranoid scholarship, is not how the United States has been brought to its present dangerous position, but how it has managed to survive at all.”

That’s something you saw in the Birch Society excerpt, and something you can see just about anywhere the paranoid style form the basis of thought. Keep it in mind as we move to the next topic.

Glenn Beck, as some of you may know, is a Mormon. The Mormon church is a large and rather complicated institution with a colorful history. Most people who are in it are not paranoid, and many of them dislike Glenn Beck. The Mormon church, which had interesting historical ties to Freemasonry, has actually been a subject of many fevered conspiracy theories—Christopher Hitchens suggested last week in the *Atlantic Monthly* that Mitt Romney would be controlled by his religion in office. Back in the 1950s, one of the most militant anti-communists in the US was President Eisenhower’s Agriculture Secretary, a man by the name of Ezra Taft Benson, who, though not a Birch society member, called the Birch society “the most effective non-church organization in our fight against creeping socialism and Godless Communism.” Benson was, at the time, one of the highest-ranking members of the Mormon church, and in 1985 became its president.

Benson also helped propel the career of another militant right-wing member of his church, named Cleon Skousen, whose book *The Naked Communist* claimed that Franklin Roosevelt's advisers had provided uranium to the Soviet Union and that Sputnik had been built with plans stolen from the US. Glenn Beck sometimes promoted another of Skousen's books, *The 5,000 Year Leap* on-air. I bring this up not to suggest that Mormons are paranoid, but to help explain some of the influences that I think are visible in Glenn Beck's work.

Now, Glenn Beck. As you watch, think of the elements of the paranoid style: grandiosity, reverence for evidence, leaps of logic, an apocalyptic tone, certainty that the enemy is perfectly effective.

7 Gerrymandering, Primaries, and Single-Member Districts

Today we'll be playing with several of the tools that political scientists use to talk about the world. So far, most of what we have looked at is closest to what a historian would use to make a claim. Documentary evidence, intellectual history, these kinds of things are the domain of historians. Political scientists are all about numbers, formal logic, thought experiments, statistical tools, polling, and something they call formal modeling. Formal modeling is a fancy term for stating propositions and attempting to prove them. Often, this looks a lot like math. Or economics.

The first tool I want to introduce to you is actually something I used earlier in the class. Do you remember how Mark Lilla's article, the one we read at the beginning of class, made that claim about how Americans' ideological preferences had changed since the 1960s? I put that up on a chart, one that had two axes. One of the axes I labeled preference for government intervention in private life, the other I labeled preference for government intervention in the economy. I claimed that Mark Lilla was arguing that the Republican Party lies at one corner, and the Democratic Party lies at the opposite corner here, but the American public lies here, near the origin. This is a formal model. It's also something called a spatial model, because it's a formal statement that is described in spatial terms. There are two dimensions, and I'm positing that you can plot people's ideological preferences within this space. Now, for those of you who found the chart in Miller and Schofield baffling,

well, that chart illustrated almost the same proposition that I'm describing now. The two key differences are that first, they plot things differently, so that they put points all around the origin instead of in the first quadrant, and second, they add one proposition, which they then model, which is that ideology has shifted over time, and that shift can be shown spatially.

Downs on Partisan Distribution

Before I get any deeper into that, I want to go to Downs. Actually, I want to go even a little more primitive first. There's one spatial model used in politics that all of you are familiar with. That is the Left-Right ideological spectrum. Liberals on the left, conservatives on the right. Do any of you know why liberals are on the left and conservatives on the right, more specifically, the right and left wing? The terms actually refer to seating arrangements in the French Parliament during the 18th century. So this is an old model.

Maybe some of you have taken that political compass quiz, it might still be on Facebook, which plots ideology in two dimensions, so that instead of getting points on a line, you get points in a two-dimensional space. This is more complicated than the Left-Right spectrum. Many people believe that this is also more accurate, and certainly, it does include more detail.

That said, one of the things that makes a great model is parsimony. That's a fancy word for the ease with which it explains something. You can actually learn a lot from that fairly simplistic Left-Right model. Which is what Downs does.

Downs at one point refers to another author, and says that he has kind of a canonical example. I learned it as a story about shops on a beach. Let's imagine that a bunch of people are hanging out on the oceanfront in a place called Copacabana.

People on this beach don't like to walk far to get refreshments. In fact, they prefer to minimize the distance they need to walk, or in other words, minimize the cost of getting what they want, which is a way of maximizing what they get out of the refreshments. There's a word for what I just described. It is rational. The people on this beach are rational. All that means is they will go to the closest *barraca*.

Are any of you familiar with something called the Scholastic Aptitude Test? Yes? On that test, how are scores computed? I want to know the answer to this question: does your score depend in some way on the score of others around you? It does. The SAT is "normalized," that is, the values

people receive are adjusted so that the distribution of all scores looks like this and has this mean, just about 1015.

They do this because it turns out that a lot of things in nature look like that. Now let's suppose that Copacabana looks like that. Does anything change? No, Carlos and Joao still maximize profits by getting as close to the middle of the beach as possible. What if a new *barraca* joins? It will also maximize profits by getting as close to that middle as possible.

Now, if the people on the beach are not normally distributed, but instead, are evenly distributed, each new *barraca* will maximize its profits by locating itself either in between existing barracas or between one barraca and the end of the beach. This really is what Downs is talking about, he's just talking in terms of party. What Downs is saying is that parties will behave in different ways based on the distribution of political preferences among the population.

If preferences are normally distributed, parties will maximize vote share by moving as close to the center as possible, and no one will have any reason to go to a party that is further away. The hardcore right wing will still pick this guy, Carlos, or, let's call him Mitt Romney, because the alternative, Barack Obama or the avowedly centrist Bill Clinton, or Tony Blair, right, whoever, is further to the left. Downs says this activist might stay home. But, if we make the assumption that it's worth his time to vote—and there is a debate about that—then the only rational thing to do, that is, the only thing that this grumpy voter can do, is vote for that guy who is marginally closer to him.

If preferences are evenly distributed, then he'll find a home in a different party.

Party Systems

Now, the US has two parties, and one of the key caveats about what I just described is that it really doesn't explain multipartism very well. Let me just say that, in general, and there are exceptions, in general the number of parties that compete in elections is a function of the number of seats that can be won in that election. How many seats are there in Michigan's 1st congressional district? There's one. What percentage of the vote must I win to guarantee that I win the seat, not, how many do I need to win, because the answer to that in the US is, "more than anyone else," which potentially could be two votes if every other candidate received one, but what percentage must I win to be absolutely guaranteed a seat? 50% plus one vote, or about 51%.

If we assume that candidates want to win, and we think of them, and parties, as that hot dog stand or *barraca*, where are they going to go ideologically? To the middle. Will anyone further out on their own side be able to win? No. I'm not sure if you can see this yet, but what this means is that really, only two parties can compete on a regular basis for one seat.

What if there were two seats at stake in that district? Let's say there were half as many districts and at each election, two people were elected. What percentage of the vote guarantees that I have won one of those seats? 33% plus one vote or 34%. This is going to turn into a battle on two fronts. I can win with the left third, the right third, or the middle third, and I only need to win a little more than that to guarantee a spot. When there are two seats, there are three effective parties. What's really interesting is that around the world, in general, the number of parties is the number of seats per constituency, that is, the number of seats elected per election in each district, plus one. There are exceptions—Canada and the UK have three parties but single-member districts. The key is that at the district level, the competition is almost always dominated by two parties. It's called Duverger's Law.

Here's where things get interesting. What if the ideological distribution is not normal, or evenly distributed, but looks like this. (A two-peaked distribution.) What position on the ideological space wins the election for you? In more technical language, what is your winset? Basically, for the same reasons the other cases converged to the middle, now, things converge to the edges. Any party that tries to be in the center will find that it gains more votes as it moves to one extreme or the other, that is, as it moves itself to where the people are.

Downs tells us that this kind of distribution is going to produce parties that cannot compromise, it's going to make government unstable, and it's going to change the way things work.

Now, in general, preferences are normally distributed. But, what if there were something about the way elections worked, something institutional, that produced parties and candidates that behaved as if the world looked like that, as if most voters were located towards one extreme or the other?

Let's talk about Belgium. Belgium is a weird little country. And it has this weird little tic. See, the population of Belgium is divided both geographically and linguistically between French and Dutch speakers. For complicated reasons, they don't get along. And, long story short, Dutch speakers vote in elections for Dutch-speaking politicians, French speakers vote in elections where only French-speakers may stand, and people who live in Brussels, the

capital, may, if they are bilingual, choose whether to vote in the French- or Dutch-speaking election. This means that the parliament of Belgium is elected from two almost completely separate electorates, which, though they may be normally distributed when taken as a whole, look something like a two-peaked distribution when looked at separately. This means that whenever an issue comes up related to French or Dutch language rights, the parties, and the parliament stops functioning. The country has been without a prime minister for 501 days now, because they can't put together a majority to elect a new prime minister.

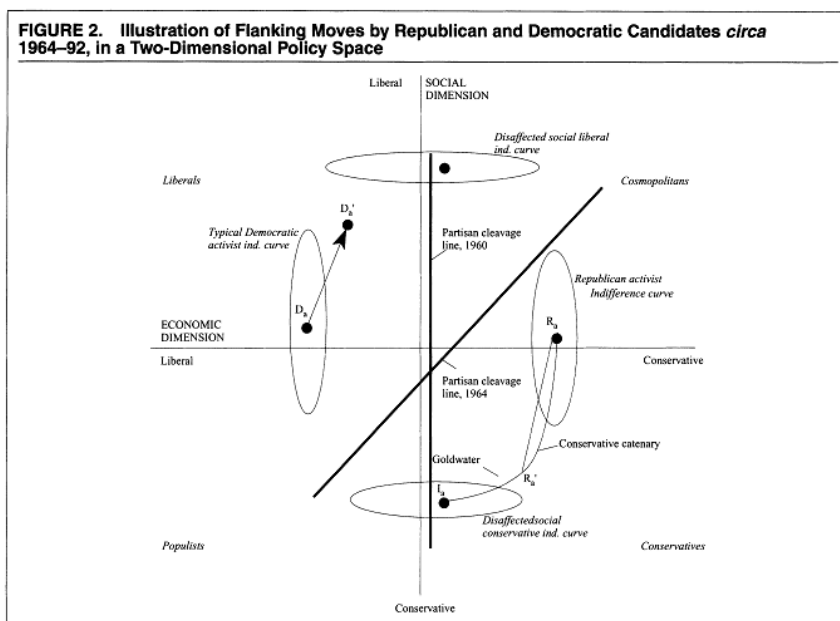
Does this sound like anything closer to home? We've heard a lot about how little compromise there is in the House, how partisan things are. Is there any mechanism you know of in American politics that resembles what I described in Belgium? Separate elections for separate groups? The answer I'm looking for is party primaries.

What's a party primary? Who votes in a party primary? There are different ways they can happen, right, they can be open, which means anyone can vote in them, or they can be closed, which means only registered members of the party may vote. And there are other institutions in some states that fulfill the same function, nominating caucuses and party conventions. Who participates in these? Is it, for the most part, average voters, or is it party partisans?

There's something else that can be thought of as analogous to creating separate electorates. That's gerrymandering.

When one politician loses a primary, all the others get scared. The going mindset among politicians is generally, "you only have to lose once."

Here's the argument: Lilla was more or less right. The reason parties do not represent that middle ground, don't hew to what the majority wants, is that party primaries, gerrymandering, and the fact that many of the biggest donors are also ideologically far from the center, means that the parties have moved towards the extremes. The Tea Party is a movement on the extreme in one dimension. It's having the same effect.



Near the end of the Downs chapter, he gives this important caveat: “we assumed that voters’ tastes were fixed, which means that the voter distribution is given.” He then says that by doing that, he dodged the very important question of what shapes voter preferences. He doesn’t have time to do that. And really, it’s pretty hard to do that. If, as Downs suggests, the patterns of politics and the institutions that result are products of the distribution, which means that we can only understand how they are shaped by voter preferences if we assume preferences are constant, but it also means that we can only understand how political competition itself affects voter preferences if we assume that voter preferences are not fixed and institutions are. Many people talk now about being disgusted with the government; very few people trust it. Did the conduct of the government cause that? Probably, at least in part. But we can only say that if we say that the conduct of the government is, to a large degree, independent of voter preferences. You have to hold one constant to give an answer about the other, but holding one constant is fallacious.

What we were talking about before was how political institutions, specifically, electoral institutions, shape the way the distribution of preferences is translated into election results.

The paper by Miller and Schofield is working with the same kind of spatial model, and much of the reasoning has been built up from Downs’ work. One

of the keys to understanding that paper is to realize that the authors have decided to work in two dimensions. Their argument, like Lilla's, is that the American electorate is divided along two dimensions, which implies four possible types of voters. They argue that at certain times, choices made by parties, ideological drift by parties, have opened up opportunities to new factions within those parties, or third parties, to act on the fringe and move the party in one direction or the other. The net result has been to turn the Republican party from the party of economic redistribution and racial progressiveness into a party that celebrates economic individualism and talks very little about race—the position the Democrats occupied in 1896.

TABLE 1. Reversal of Partisan Presidential Coalitions, 1896 to 2000

	Democratic 1896		Republican 1896	
Democratic 2000	<i>Washington</i>		Connecticut	<i>California</i>
			Delaware	<i>Iowa</i>
			Illinois	<i>Maine</i>
			Maryland	<i>Oregon</i>
			Massachusetts	<i>Vermont</i>
			Michigan	<i>Wisconsin</i>
			Minnesota	
			New Jersey	
			New York	
			Pennsylvania	
			Rhode Island	
Republican 2000	<i>Colorado</i>	Alabama	W. Virginia	<i>Indiana</i>
	<i>Florida</i>	Arkansas		<i>New Hampshire</i>
	<i>Idaho</i>	Georgia		<i>N. Dakota</i>
	<i>Kansas</i>	Louisiana		<i>Ohio</i>
	<i>Kentucky</i>	Mississippi^a		
	<i>Montana</i>	Missouri		
	<i>Nebraska</i>	Nevada		
	<i>S. Dakota</i>	N. Carolina		
	<i>Tennessee</i>	S. Carolina		
	<i>Utah</i>	Texas		
	<i>Virginia</i>			
	<i>Wyoming</i>			
		23		22

Note: Italicized states are those that were Republican in 1960. Boldfaced states are those that were Democratic in 1960. $\chi^2 = 24.91$ with 3 df ($p < .005$); $r^2 = .55$.
^a Although Kennedy outpolled Nixon in Mississippi (31% to 25%), a plurality voted for electors who cast their electoral votes for segregationist Harry Byrd.

One really interesting thing here is that they, like Downs, assume voter preferences are constant. You know they do because they show that table of states. The fact that states have moved from one partisan affiliation to another could mean several things; let's pretend it's one of two things: either the ideological makeup of the state has changed, or the ideologies of the parties have changed. The fact that these states are included tells us that they think one of these things should be thought of as more or less constant, and since the paper is about parties trading spaces, it's the voters who've stayed the same and the parties that have changed.

The biggest changes happened in the era of the New Deal and Johnson's Civil Rights act of 1964. Did you notice why, according to Miller and

Schofield, Roosevelt abandoned moderation? He came to believe that the biggest threat to his reelection was not a Republican, but someone advocating more extreme forms of redistribution. So he moved left. This is that phenomenon we were exploring with primaries, this time at a larger scale and in a way shaped less by electoral institutions than by prevailing conditions at the time.

The Civil Rights bill was the other moment that set the stage for decades of competition. There's a telling line in Miller and Schofield, one that made me think of how the healthcare bill became a litmus test for many candidates: "No member of the House who had voted for the 1964 Civil Rights Act was defeated in either party. Half the Northern members who had voted against the bill were defeated."

That Mark Lilla article said that voter preferences have changed, but the parties haven't caught up.

I want to suggest, and this shouldn't be too strange, that voter preferences do change over time, and they change in response to the partisan battles of the past. The electorate is not fixed. It is always losing members and gaining new ones. People come of age in the Depression, receive the help of the New Deal, and become deeply attached to the Democratic Party. Their children grow up in an era of unprecedented affluence and fight for recognition, or they find themselves disturbed by continuing economic radicalism. Or whatever. What came before shapes what we have now. So we get a set of voters who deeply distrust the government—and that set encompasses a broad swath of the electorate.

8 Conservative Populism

I asked you to read about Populism this week. I asked you to read about it because "populism" is a word that has come up often in the past few years. The Tea Party movement has been called populist. The people who attach that label to it are often supporters using the word as a synonym for "grassroots," with the implication that the message, or agenda, of the Tea Party is one that serves the interests of the American people as a whole. Or at least that it represents the subset of Americans who matter most, generally framed as working Americans. I think of a song I once heard, a parody song referring mostly to former vice-president Dan Quayle. The song went, "We are the true Americans \We are in the right," with a strong emphasis on the

word “right.” What’s populist here, but also, Kazin suggests, distinctive to American populism, is the idea that “we,” meaning the people on the side of the debate, are true Americans, more in tune with the founding ideals of our country than our opponents.

When supporter of the Tea Party call it populist, they are connecting it to the venerable tradition of reverence for popular sovereignty in the United States. “We the people,” and “government of the people, by the people, and for the people.” In America, being the people, taking on the voice of the people, or claiming to represent them, is a way of saying that you are right. It is a mode of argumentation. It is a way of bolstering your arguments. If something is populist, it is popular, it is something the people want, and therefore something that our democracy should enact. Ensuring that the will of the people is what happens is, in our minds at least, the whole point of American democracy. Now, you can look at the writings of many founding father types and discover they were afraid of “the people,” of popular movements, but certainly we have been socialized, and Americans have long been socialized to think that the government should be doing exactly what the people, however narrowly defined, want.

Reporters use the term also. Sometimes they’re describing this same rhetorical style. At other times, they use it as a catch-all for demagoguery, or for any kind of sectional appeal that is made to lower classes.

Kazin tells us that populism isn’t really either of these. It’s a way of speaking, and it’s suited to many kinds of political, or policy, goals. One of the keys to understanding its role in American politics, however, is exactly that connection to the ideals of democracy that I referred to earlier.

When scholars write the history of populism in the United States, they often point to the era of the People’s party as the time in which a movement called Populism with a capital *P* was one of the most salient forces in US politics. It began in 1891, and was relevant between 1891 and 1896. The movement reflected the interests of Southern, Southwesterns, and Plains states farmers, who wanted freer currency so that they could have greater access to capital. Their platform, a document called the Omaha platform that some of you may remember from AP US history courses, called for a graduated income tax, eight-hour workdays, civil service reform, and the direct election of senators. Between 1893 and 1907 they elected eleven governors in nine states. Their cause was the one William Jennings Bryan made famous with his “cross of gold speech.” That speech was made in 1896, and Bryan was a Democrat. The People’s Party very quickly became incorporated into

the Democratic Party platform. That's the Populist movement. It matters for understanding the language of populism, and some of the themes that users of the populist rhetorical style bring out to build their case. (Discussion followed)

9 Why this? Why now? What Comes Next?

One of the questions I asked you to think about is a question that I don't think has been satisfactorily answered by the accounts I have heard. That question is *Why now?* The financial crisis is a huge part of it, of course, but when I ask "why now?" I am really asking, "Why this, and why today?" Critics of the Tea Party, at least the ones who oppose it from the left, are quick to point out that many Tea Partiers beliefs (or the beliefs that they attribute to Tea Partiers) are inconsistent, contradictory. The famous example is that sign that may never have actually existed: "Get your government hands off my Medicare." Or my Social Security.

The criticism here boils down to this: Tea Party supporters do not understand how much the things they depend on to provide life's necessities and life's niceties depend on effective government, or interventionist choices, or social programs of the type they deride. In its most pointed forms, in less sophisticated forms, this criticism is really quite simple: Tea Partiers do not understand the world, implying, of course, that the critic does. More simplified still: the Tea Partiers are stupid.

From the information gleaned in polls about income and education levels among Tea Party supporters, I think it is both safe and fair to discard the idea that Tea Party supporters are, to a man, stupid, ignorant, or motivated purely by racism. We should also discard the idea that they are uninformed. In their minds, they are. They read the books Glenn Beck recommends, they quote the constitution, they are conversant with the Federalist Papers. Perhaps they are not as conversant as the people in this room, or their interpretations are not supported by more careful historical readings. That matters—if they're wrong about what Jefferson meant, they are wrong. And relativism and the vagaries of textual interpretation should not be allowed to shield incorrect readings from scrutiny. Nonetheless, they are reading. They are fired up. They are (or were for a few months) out to remake American government.

And in concert with poor economic performance that weakened an in-

cumbent party that can be thought of as overextended, they succeeded in energizing a party.

One of the myths of the early Tea Party was the claim that it was not partisan. Certainly, if its members were motivated by anger at not being represented by the mainstream parties, they should not have taken a partisan identity. And they didn't. Remember Michigan's 1st district, that Dan Banishek character, the campaign manager saga, and the agonized debate within the Tea Party group over whether to support a Republican or run a third party candidate. Those debates reflected a high level of political sophistication: they knew that a run outside of the Republican party could spoil the district for conservatives. That's one of the consequences of our electoral system, a mechanical problem with being a third party in the US.

They've aligned with the Republican party. It was a natural fit. It was a natural fit, I think, because the Tea Party's ideas are really the ideas of a certain subset of Republicans. That subset has been around for a long time, it's the group who are individualists, opposed to government activities in the economy, opposed to welfarism of any kind—either on spiritual grounds, that it enslaves its recipients, or on the utilitarian grounds that it doesn't achieve its goals. Barry Goldwater was the first big break for this wing. He hated welfare. He voted for most civil rights bills except the big one, the 1964 one, because he was disturbed by the federal government interventions that were taking place within states. The class that entered with the Goldwater campaign included a huge core of the party. They became the new establishment: William F. Buckley was for twenty years the face of a certain kind of conservatism, one that eschewed much of the racialized, religiously motivated politicking of what have been called "culture wars."

Tea Partiers, despite claiming never to have been involved, seem aware enough to have been exposed to this strain of conservatism. The conservatism that helped elect Ronald Reagan. They may also be aware of the way insurgent movements have managed to reshape the Republican party. Goldwater helped bring an end to the East coast liberal Republican establishment. George Romney, governor of Michigan and Nixon's Housing and Urban Development secretary, attempted one of the most ambitious public housing projects in US history. Nixon experimented with price controls. Republicans were once New England banker types, patrician, often affiliated with mainline protestant churches or even atheistic. Then religious groups became the dominant force in the party. Men like Buckley, or Goldwater, religious but not interested in the school prayer and abortion fights, saw their

agenda pushed aside for a while.

That strain never went away, though. The Tea Partiers are Republicans interested in the economic agenda expressed for the first time on a great national stage during the Goldwater campaign. They are insurgents—like Goldwater, but not like Buckley. They are not patrician, even when they do fight for things that would benefit bankers.

They are angry about the financial crisis. Motivated by the fact that a Democrat is in office. It's worth noting, though, that when Bush was in office, libertarian groups of a type that has become a strong force in the Tea Party movement led protests that were growing, proto Tea Parties against government spending, in favor of the free market.

So why now? The crisis. When the stakes are high, people come out to protest. Discontent with the elected officials, made pressing because of poor economic conditions.

But back to the hard question: if this is a revival of an old Republican insurgency, why has this insurgency reappeared now? Why is it relevant; why not some other ideology? And how similar is it?

One of the most insightful books I've ever had the chance to read is John Kenneth Galbraith's *The Affluent Society*, a book that describes America in the early Sixties, describes the impressive level of prosperity, and then points out that mass prosperity is a true deviation from the historical norm. Through most of history, most people have been poor most of the time. That is not true in the United States. Now, this thesis is dangerous, because it can lead you to assume that there are no poor people in the US. That is simply not true. But it is fair to say that one of the defining characteristics of American life is that the majority of people have enough to live on. In fact, a majority of families have access to equity through homes, credit, paid employment. Surely, this must affect the way we relate to each other and the way we relate to politics.

One of the reasons populist language changed in the 1970s, why Nixon was successful with his words, was that millions of American voters now identified themselves as property owners. That is still the case today. Consider what the interests of property owners are—low property taxes, among other things. Consider for a moment how mass ownership could elevate the importance we might place on being left alone; consider how, when everyone owns things, projects that require communal contributions start to feel like impositions. I'm trying to describe why the individualist, wealth-oriented philosophy that celebrates property, ideas found in some form in Bastiat,

Rand, in Goldwater's campaign, in Ron Paul's words in the 1980s and today, in Robert Jarvis' California tax revolt, and in today's Tea Party movement can resonate with so many people. The culture of mass ownership also encourages the producer ethos: the sense that one's work has produced what one owns, and that it was fair. It might even encourage our attitude to liberty in the private sphere—we don't live all that close to each other, so what our neighbors do really doesn't have anything to do with us.

There's a place that, in describing it, it is possible to capture many of the tensions in recent American history that feed into this movement. That place is Arizona. Senator Goldwater came from Arizona. John McCain came from Arizona. The recall that has left the liberal blogosphere all atwitter over a possible partisan realignment happened in Arizona on Tuesday. Janet Napolitano, the current Secretary of Homeland Security, was for six years the Democratic governor of Arizona. When Senator Goldwater took office in 1953, the state was in the midst of what must have seen like a huge demographic shift—the population had gone from just under 500,000 in 1940 to 750,000 by 1950. By 1960, it was over 1.3 million. In 1990, it was about 3.7 million, and today, it's over 6.6 million people.

That growth, especially the early growth between 1950, was made possible by a huge expansion in government. Defense contractors exploded throughout the West during the Cold War. They created Arizona. Goldwater, for all his small government bluster, was also a tremendous hawk. Hawkishness was the business of Arizona. The Phoenix suburbs today extend forever. If you incorporate the capital costs of building the huge dams (Hoover, Glen Canyon) that made the Colorado the source of these suburbs' water, and the federal funding that pays for water line expansions in most places, the cost of water in that desert state is subsidized 90% by the federal government. Even the suburban model of development owes a great deal to Federal action: a tax break called the mortgage interest tax deduction makes it often cheaper to own than to rent. Without it, everyone would live in Phoenix, and no one would live in Gilbert or Mesa.

You can still find Birchers in Arizona, and signs like the memorable "Get us out of the UN."

But Arizona has long been a hotbed of antigovernment politics. In that harsh landscape, the desire to be left alone has shaped generations of thought about how to relate to the government. Arizona is a microcosm of the nation as a whole, or of what the nation is becoming. People are moving to warm suburbs. They are working in (looking at the state's largest employers)

Wal-Mart, Banner Health, Wells Fargo, Bank of America, Raytheon, JP Morgan Chase, and Honeywell. Banks, retailers, and defense contractors. Their economy began with defense money and continued through housing, which generated employment through contracting in construction, banking to finance the houses and the cars, state contracts for roads and sewage lines, retailers, all also involving immigrant workers, legal and illegal. In 2009 and 2010, Arizona had the second-highest number of foreclosures—one in 17 houses in 2010 received at least one foreclosure filing.

In my mind, Arizona is a microcosm of the environment that has produced the Tea Party. Most Arizonans are not Tea Partiers, though JD Hayworth nearly unseated John McCain. The Tea Party message appeals to homeowners. Its angry aspects matter especially to the kinds of people who didn't take out loans they couldn't afford—something millions of people did in both boom states and Michigan—and felt their responsible actions had netted them nothing. Except a future tax increase.

The Senate majority leader in Arizona was unseated on Tuesday. He lost a special election. I believe it was the first time a sitting Arizona legislator was unseated in a recall election. Those Salon articles read that as a sign that the Tea Party is finished. I think that some Tea Party members, especially the most doctrinaire, may be at risk. I think that the forces acting on the party will force its representatives to move closer to the mainstream to keep their seats, and will unseat those who don't make that move. As Matt Bai suggests, some of them will become the new establishment, and as part of the establishment, their behavior will change.

Remember Santelli, the people to blame were those irresponsible homeowners who defaulted on their loans. That's populism, at least if populism is simply a style that pits producers against others. Producers being the Wall Street crowd, and looters, to borrow Rand's word, the defaulters who were to be bailed out—they never produced anything.

Some version of Tea Party-ism will continue within the Republican party. I see the movement as a revival of Goldwaterite ideology without the hawkishness, a fiscal conservatism that fights for the interests of property holders, but really, small property holders—small businessmen squeezed on both ends, a few of the people laid off who didn't take on debt they couldn't afford, most of all, people who believe they were solely responsible for their own success and others should be responsible for their failures.